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## EARLY LIBRARIES IN ILLINOIS.

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By W. T. Norton.

There was on exhibition at Edwardsville last September, at the centennial celebration of the organization of Madison county, a catalogue of what was the earliest, or the next to the earliest public library established in Illinois. The catalogue was printed in 1819 by Hooper Warren, editor of the Edwardsville Spectator. It was exhibited by Capt. A. L. Brown and had been handed down through three generations of his family. There is no known record of when the society was organized, or who constituted it in addition to the librarian, John N. Randle. Neither is it known how long it existed, but it eventually dissolved and part of the books fell to John T. Lusk, the maternal grandfather of Capt. Brown. As the catalogue was printed in 1819 the association must, of necessity, have been organized earlier. It may have been in 1819, or possibly prior to that year. As a matter of historic interest and as illustrative of the literary taste of our forefathers I append the list of books entire:

### “A COMPLETE CATALOGUE OF

ALL THE BOOKS NOW IN OR BELONGING TO THE EDWARDSVILLE LIBRARY, AT LIBRARY ROOM, EDWARDSVILLE,  
Nov., 1819.

American State Papers, in 12 Volumes; Adams' Defense; Burns' Poems; Blair's Lectures; Brydon's Tour; Butler's Hudibras; Beauties of History; Bartram's Travels; Belknap's American Biography; Coe's in Search of a Wife; Cowper's Homer, 4 volumes; Campaign in Russia; Carvel's Travels; Camilla, or a Picture

of Youth; Clarke's Travels; Christian Researches in Asia; Clarkson's History; Clark's Naval History; Depom's Voyage; Domestic Encyclopedia; Ely's Journal; Elements of Criticism; Ferguson's Roman Republic; The Federalist; Guy Mannering; Gibbon's Rome, 4 volumes; Goldsmith's Works, 6 volumes; Grand Pre's Voyage; Gil Blas, 4 volumes; History of Carraccas; History of Chili; History of Greece; History of Charles Fifth; History of England; Hawkworth's Voyages; Humboldt's New Spain; Jefferson's Notes; Letters of Junius; Marshall's Life of Washington; McFingal, a Modern Epic Poem; Mayo's Ancient Geography and History; Modern Europe; McLeod on the Revelation; McKenzie's Voyage; Moore's Poems; McNevins' Switzerland; Ossian's Poems; Practical Education; Plutarch's Lives; Porter's Travels; Ramsay's Washington; Rob Roy; Rollin's Ancient History, with atlas, 8 volumes; Rumford's Essays; Robertson's America; Scottish Chiefs; Sterne's Works, 5 volumes; Scott's Works, 4 volumes; Salmagundi, 2 volumes; Shakespeare's Plays, 6 volumes; Spectator, 10 volumes; Tales of My Landlord; Telemachus; Warsaw; Travels of Anacharsis; Thompson's Seasons; Turnbull's Voyages; Universal Gazetteer; Vicissitudes Abroad, 6 volumes; Volney's America; Virginia Debates; Vicar of Wakefield; Views of Louisiana; Wirt's Life of Patrick Henry; Watt's Logic; Wealth of Nations; Young's Night Thoughts; Zimmerman on National Pride,

JOHN N. RANDLE,

H. WARREN, Printer.

Librarian.

Drawn for the Use of Shareholders at Library Room,  
Edwardsville, Nov. 30, 1819."

This is certainly an admirable selection of choice literature to be found in a pioneer library. Doubtless it exerted a wide influence in raising the standard of culture in this new settlement on the border. In this list of some 120 volumes there are few works of fiction. How many of these books would be called for at our public libraries

in this novel-reading age in competition with the "best ten sellers?"

As a rival for Edwardsville for the honor of being the location of the first public library in Illinois we find the famous English settlement at Albion in Edwards county, the home of Morris Birkbeck and Richard and George Flower. Many references to this library are found in early books of travel and correspondence from Illinois. A definite date as to the year of its establishment is given in the *Edwardsville Spectator* of Dec. 26, 1820. It says that the library was founded in 1818 and attracted the attention of distinguished visitors and reviewers. It was housed in one part of a building used as a market house. It was free to the public and was open on Sunday afternoons." The *Spectator* names Richard Flower as the founder and promoter of the society.

W. Faux, in his "Memorable Days," 1823, writes:

"A good market house and a public library is at the end (of Albion) in which a kind of Unitarian worship is held on Sunday, when a sermon and the church service purified is read by any one who pleases. The books are donations from the Flower family and their friends in England. By sending donations, people become honorary members, and Mrs. Flower has, by all legal means, secured perpetuity to this institution which few expect to find in this distant wilderness."

Mr. Walter Colyer relates that this early library contained from 2,000 to 3,000 volumes mainly the donations of the Flower family and that distinguished anti-slavery writer, Morris Birkbeck, the most valued ally of Governor Coles in the anti-slavery struggle of 1824. The society, Mr. Colyer says, had its own building. How long the organization continued does not appear, but it most certainly had a notable career. Many of the books belonging to it are said to be still in existence in the hands of the old families of Albion. It will be seen from these facts that to either Edwardsville or Albion belongs the honor of having founded the first public library in Illinois. How

long the original society at Edwardsville existed is, as stated, not of record. But sixty or more years after it was established the present library association was organized by the initiative of leading ladies of the city. At a meeting held May 3, 1879, an organization was effected, and a charter obtained later from the Secretary of State. The library was opened with 100 volumes, the donation of Mr. John A. Prickett. This was a humble beginning for an institution that now boasts 5,000 volumes and is housed in a splendid Carnegie library building.

The third pioneer library established in Illinois was, probably, one of which Rev. Dr. A. T. Norton makes mention in his "History of the Presbyterian Church in Illinois." It was located at Kaskaskia and one of its officials was Hon. David J. Baker, later a senator of the United States. The record reads:

"An organization called the Kaskaskia Social Library Association was made November 7, 1826. Its officers were Col. Thomas Mather, librarian; Miss Frances Brard, treasurer; Mrs. Susan Lamb, Mrs. Bond, Mrs. E. H. Morrison, Rev. J. M. Ellis, Mr. D. J. Baker, Mr. St. Vrain, standing committee. The sum constituting membership was from 25 cents to one dollar, or over, according to the voluntary subscription of each person becoming a member. Here is a receipt given by Rev. John Matthews to D. J. Baker:

"Kaskaskia, March 16, 1830.

"Received of Mr. D. J. Baker (Esq.) treasurer of the Library Society of Kaskaskia, one dollar sixty-two and a half cents, to pay over to Mr. Ellis for books bought for the society.

JOHN MATTHEWS."

The Miss Frances Brard, referred to above, was a highly educated lady of French extraction. She was born in Baltimore where her parents had fled during the insurrection in San Domingo, where they were resident.

She came to Illinois in 1819 to make her home with relatives. She subsequently became the wife of Rev. John M. Ellis, the famous pioneer preacher and educator.

Though not to be classed as a pioneer organization, the Alton Library Association (now known as the Jennie D. Hayner Library Association) has, perhaps, as long a continuous existence as any in the State. It was organized in 1852 and has now behind it sixty-one consecutive years of usefulness. The first president of the society was P. W. Randle. It is a coincidence that the librarian of the Edwardsville society in 1819 was John N. Randle, indicating a literary strain running through the Randle family, one of the oldest in Madison county. In 1867 the Alton society elected a full board of lady directors, and it has been under the control of such directors ever since. Mrs. J. J. Mitchell was the first lady president. Several prominent ladies have since graced that position, the one holding office longest being Mrs. J. P. Laird, who served from 1882 to her death in 1909, with the exception of one year. After many years of gradual expansion the society found its future growth hampered by a lack of suitable quarters. At this crisis Mr. John E. Hayner came forward and offered to erect a library building as a memorial to his wife, the late Mrs. Jennie D. Hayner. The offer was gratefully accepted, and Mr. Hayner thereupon erected a modern library building completely appointed at a cost of \$20,000. He also gave it an endowment of \$15,000. Mr. Hayner died in 1903, but his heirs continued his munificent work in accordance with his known wishes. His heirs, Mrs. Mary Caroline Hayner, Mrs. Florence Hayner Haskell, John A. Haskell and Dr. W. A. Haskell, added \$48,000 in the way of endowments and an annex building, making the total benefactions of Mr. Hayner and his heirs, for this object, \$83,000. Other generous donors were Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Eliot Smith, Mrs. C. L. Wright and Mrs. O. S. Stowell, together with a \$5,000

endowment from citizens of Alton in general. With a perfectly equipped building and an ample endowment fund the Hayner Memorial Library provides the public with books absolutely free and with no tax upon the public for maintenance. The library now contains some 16,000 volumes. Miss Florence Dolbee has been for many years its cultured librarian.